

to be an example of somebody who—it came a little later. *[Laughter]* But everybody has got a Caleb out there. And we've got to make sure that they have the chance not only to fulfill their potential, but by doing so, creating that chance for us to fulfill this country's potential.

We are coming out of this recession with the most diverse, most digitally fluent, in many ways, most sophisticated generation in American history. Anybody who's interacting with young people today comes away impressed. But they're also concerned, because these kids are growing up at a time when a lot of people have lost faith in institutions and are inherently skeptical about what's possible. And I want to make sure young people with that spark never lose sense of what's possible.

If all of us work together—teachers, parents, nonprofits, corporations, school districts, uni-

versity system—if we make sure they remain the best educated generation in American history, there is no limit to what they can achieve, there's no limit to what this country can achieve.

So I want to thank you all for the important work you do. Stay at it. And I look forward to seeing you at the next summit.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:17 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Scholar Chionque Mines, who introduced the President; and Jeff Nelson, cofounder and chief executive officer, One Goal.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree *December 4, 2014*

Merry Christmas, everybody! We saw this party going on out back and we thought we'd join you.

I want to thank Secretary Jewell for not only the introduction, but for all that you and everybody who's part of the Interior Department and the Park Service do to protect the magnificent outdoors for our children and for future generations. And I want to thank Jonathan Jarvis, Dan Wenk, and everybody at the National Park Service and the National Park Foundation for putting on this special event each and every holiday season.

I want everybody to give it up for our charming Christmas hosts tonight, Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson. We have so enjoyed the incredible performers, including the one and only Patti LaBelle. And finally, thanks to all of you who are here and watching at home for joining us to celebrate this wonderful holiday tradition.

Back in 1923, school kids here in Washington wrote a letter to the White House asking if they could put a Christmas tree on the South Lawn. And more than 90 years and a few different evergreens later—*[laughter]*—the Na-

tional Christmas Tree still stands as a symbol of hope and holiday spirit, and we still gather as a country each year to light it.

We still have school kids involved too. But this year, they've given all the State and territory trees surrounding the National Christmas Tree their first digital upgrade. Young women from all 50 States used their computers, using their coding skills to control the colors and patterns of the lights on these trees. So thanks to those wonderful students. It is incredibly impressive. It's actually one of the few things that Tom Hanks cannot do. *[Laughter]*

But while lighting the tree has entered into the 21st century, the story that we remember this season dates back more than 2,000 years. It's the story of hope: the birth of a singular child into the simplest of circumstances, a child who would grow up to live a life of humility and kindness and compassion, who traveled with a message of empathy and understanding, who taught us to care for the poor and the marginalized and those who are different from ourselves. And more than two millennia later, the way he lived still compels us to do our best

to build a more just and tolerant and decent world.

It's a story dear to my family as Christians, but its meaning is one embraced by all peoples across our country and around the world, regardless of how they pray or whether they pray at all. And that's to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be one another's keepers, to have faith in one another and in something better around the bend. Not just at Christmastime, but all the time.

And finally, this Christmas, we count our blessings and we give thanks to the men and women of our military, who help make those blessings possible. And as we hold our loved ones tight, let's remember the military families whose loved ones are far from home. They are

our heroes, and they deserve our heartfelt gratitude and our wholehearted support.

So, on behalf of Michelle, Malia, Sasha, mom-in-law—[laughter]—and our reindeer Bo and Sunny—[laughter]—I want to wish all of them and I want to wish all of you a very, very merry Christmas and a holiday filled with joy.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:12 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Daniel Wenk, Superintendent, Yellowstone National Park; and actors Thomas J. Hanks and his wife Margarita Wilson Hanks, who cohosted the event. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Remarks on the Nomination of Ashton B. Carter To Be Secretary of Defense December 5, 2014

The President. Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. It is wonderful to be able to announce not the creation, but at least the filling of one new job. [Laughter] But before we do, I wanted to make a somewhat broader statement about the economy. And Ash is willing to indulge me.

National Economy

Last month, America's businesses created more than 300,000 jobs. Now, this keeps a pace so far this year that we have not seen since the 1990s. So far this year, over the first 11 months of 2014, our economy has created 2.65 million jobs. That's more than in any entire year since the 1990s. Our businesses have now created 10.9 million jobs over the past 57 months in a row. And that's the longest streak of private sector job growth on record.

We also know that the pickup in the pace of job growth this year has been in industries with higher wages. And overall, wages are rising, a very welcome sign for millions of Americans. So we've got an opportunity to keep up this progress if Congress is willing to keep our Government open, avoid self-inflicted wounds, and

work together to invest in the things that support faster job growth in high-paying jobs. And that means exports, infrastructure, streamlining our Tax Code, immigration reform, giving minimum wage workers a raise.

And it's been a long road to recovery from the worst economic crisis in generations, and we still have a lot more work to do to make sure that hard-working Americans' wages are growing faster. But the United States continues to outpace most of the world. Over the last 4 years, we've put more people back to work than Europe, Japan, and all other industrialized advanced countries combined. And we're going to keep at it until every single American who is willing and able to work can find not just any job, but a job that pays a decent wage and allows them to support their families.

But it's worth us every once in a while reflecting on the fact that the American economy is making real progress. And if we can continue in this trajectory, if we can continue to grow robustly, and if we make sure that those companies who are seeing profits that are probably higher than any time in the last 60 years, that they're also making sure that their workers are sharing in that growth, then we can get a